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ABSTRACT

Problems arising from a state mandate that school-based and college- or university-based teacher education programs be cooperatively developed are examined. The following issues raised from the school district perspective are considered: (1) What mechanisms will be established to insure ongoing communication between college and field-based staff? (2) How does the role of teacher educator fit into a public school teacher's regular responsibilities? (3) How will school personnel be involved in planning, implementation, and evaluation of teacher preparation programs? (4) What criteria will be developed cooperatively to assess each field-based experience? (5) What kinds of experiences will be made available to prepare field-based personnel and/or college faculty? (6) What kind of reward system will insure the participation of field-based personnel? (7) How can increased responsibility for field-based experiences of preservice teachers fit into the school's need to insure pupil and professional accountability? (8) Should the public agree to the school's participation in teacher preparation? Seven problems are raised from the perspective of the university or college: (1) Will increased field experiences improve the quality of teacher preparation programs? (2) If schools of education maintain present organizational structures compatible with the arts and sciences, can teacher educators establish more than peripheral relationships with the field? (3) If teacher educators become more field-based, are they committing professional suicide within the university? (4) If professional schools of education are closely aligned with the field, will subject area methods faculty press to join departments in the arts and sciences? (5) Should teacher educators turn supervision of field-based experiences over to classroom teachers? (6) Is the liberal arts model dysfunctional for schools of education? (7) Does the background and training of teacher educators allow them to consider other ways of organizing schools of education? (JD)

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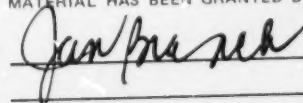
ANALYSIS OF CORE QUESTIONS IN THE
THEORY-PRACTICE GAP

A paper presented at the 58th Annual Meeting of the Association
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AN ANALYSIS OF CORE QUESTIONS IN THE
THEORY-PRACTICE GAP

Steve Hawley and Jan Branch

During the past few years we have had the occasion to work with preservice teachers just returning to the university from student teaching and with school personnel who were considering curricular innovations. In many cases returning student teachers have said: Student teaching was great; but I had to unlearn all of that stuff I learned in my methods classes. Likewise, school personnel have indicated: I understand what you are saying and I buy it; but it won't work in my district.

These examples are not new. Examination of recent changes in teacher preparation across the country suggests that state legislatures are mandating structural changes that will reduce such examples of the theory-practice gap as those cited above. The following mandates have become rather common place: Objectives for teacher preparation must be specified; preservice teachers must have more and varied field experiences; relationships must be established between universities and school districts for the purposes of planning, supervising, and evaluating field experiences in varied settings.

In sum, the intent of such legislation seems to be to get preservice teachers into the field earlier to work with real teachers and kids; get university faculty into the field to work with real teachers; and get real teachers involved with university faculty in planning field experiences. Seemingly, such mandates could result in giant steps toward reducing the theory-practice gap in teacher preparation.

In Ohio, the home state of the speakers, the situation is much the same. New Standards (1975) have been adopted and by 1980 all colleges and universities must comply with similar mandates as those cited above: more and varied field experiences; contractual arrangements between universities and school districts for the purposes of planning, implementing, supervising, and evaluating those field experiences; and so forth.

One characteristic of the Ohio mandates that may be unique is that state funds for development of programs to comply with the new Standards have been dispersed to both colleges and universities and school districts. Hence, across the state of Ohio, you may see school-based teacher education redesign projects and college- or university-based teacher education redesign projects.

According to the state mandates, the school-based and the college- or university-based efforts are to be cooperatively developed. This mandate is what has brought the two speakers together for this presentation. Steve Hawley is the director of one school-based teacher education redesign project in Ohio; and Jan Branch is in charge of the teacher education redesign effort in a nearby Ohio university.

During the past two years as we have worked together in coordinating the development of programs to comply with the Ohio mandates, we have encountered numerous situations which seem to be at the core of the theory-practice dilemma. For purposes of analysis we have identified fifteen issues which capture the essence of the difficulties we have experienced in trying to collaborate. The rest of this paper is devoted to an examination of these issues.

In the spirit of collaboration, we have divided the issues into two groups: those from a school district perspective and those from a university perspective. We selected an odd number of issues, fifteen, so as not to give the impression that we are deadlocked.

School District Perspective

During the past three years Ohio college and school district faculties have discussed many issues relative to school district participation in teacher preparation programs. Consortia have attempted to draft the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for preservice teachers to become effective educators. Discussion has centered around supervision, remuneration, course content, and effectiveness of field-based experiences. The new Ohio Standards mandate 300 additional clock hours of field experiences prior to student teaching. The content, implementation, and

evaluation of those hours are the cooperative responsibility of the university and school district staff. Specific competencies are to be attained by all future teachers in diagnostic/prescriptive teaching of reading and mathematics, classroom management, self-analysis of performance skills, utilization of educational media, and dealing effectively with various kinds of human behavior.

The translation of theory into practice deserves meaningful resolution for the preservice teacher throughout his or her preparation. Forty-two of over 1100 applicants received jobs this year in our school district. Qualifications often centered on the evaluation by cooperating teachers as to the teacher candidate's potential. Such evaluations should be based on universally understood terminology, objectives, expectations, experiences, and adequately prepared cooperating teachers and university supervisors. But are they?

Eight issues seem to dominate the theory-practice gap. Each of these will be covered in turn.

1. What mechanisms will be established to insure ongoing communication between university and field-based staff?

One of the problems in any field-based experience in teacher preparation is the amount of knowledge classroom teachers have about the actual experience. Expectations and overall objectives need to be shared in person to insure common understanding. Classroom teachers need to know how and when university personnel can be contacted. Respect needs to be generated and maintained for the different university and field perspectives held about the student(s) involved in the experience.

Can meetings be set up for university personnel and cooperating classroom teachers at the beginning of any field experience? Transportation is a factor inherent in supervisor visitation for such events. Who will pay the cost and set the parameters for such meetings? Communication needs to be established under the umbrella of mutual benefit for each participant involved. Can this be done if the university

assumes it has sole responsibility for preservice teacher education and eventual certification?

2. How does the role of teacher educator fit into a public school teacher's regular responsibilities?

Preservice teachers often evaluate their field experiences as the "most meaningful part of their preparation program". One student said, "the classroom teacher and the environment offered me the opportunity to see how I fit into the educational scene. I was able to evaluate my own future course and commitment to education as a result of this experience".

However, the classroom teacher's main responsibility is the education of his/her pupils. How much time should be devoted to working with teacher trainees who are entering the classroom with varying degrees of expertise?

It would be easy to say that such help would aid the classroom teacher. The truth is that the entry level of the preservice teacher is rarely known. Course titles do little to enumerate a student's actual knowledge and skills. Thus the cooperating classroom teacher may have to spend an inordinate amount of time in training the preservice teacher. Should this be the responsibility of the classroom teacher or the university?

3. How will public school personnel be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of teacher preparation programs?

Studies done at Miami University and the Greenhills-Forest Park School District in Ohio in the last year indicate that teachers want to be involved in the planning of field-based experiences for preservice teachers. Since field experiences are viewed by the State of Ohio as necessary, school staff feel some responsibility to plan them so that they can be carried out effectively. However, some danger signs can impede forward progress on this issue. When will the school staff be involved? Who will pay for release time? What levels of expertise are needed by

school staff? Will university faculty feel "encroached upon" by involving public school personnel on a regular basis? Will accountability for the outcomes of field experiences be jointly shared by university and public school faculties?

4. What criteria will be developed cooperatively to assess each field-based experience?

There needs to be a common understanding of the intent of field-based experiences and their contribution to the preservice teacher's total preparation. Criteria need to be realistic.

In a report entitled "Building Bridges for Total Involvement" (1977), a group of field-based coordinators developed positions, rationale, and specific activities for students to complete during their sophomore, junior, and senior years. Such standardization of possibilities helps the cooperating classroom teacher to meet the needs of preservice teachers within the context of his/her classroom.

Evaluation requires subjective and objective judgment. What is the degree of each? Who will determine this degree? Can a preservice teacher student do tasks which a university requires without consulting classroom teachers in cooperating school districts?

5. What kinds of experiences will be made available to inservice or prepare field-based personnel and/or university faculty?

The increased role of field personnel in the training of preservice teachers implies additional orientation to the role. Who can adequately provide this training? What are the rewards for having such an experience? The cost, time, and place for such experiences also must be dealt with before initiating new programs.

There needs to be additional understanding of the school sites used by colleges and universities. In the past, contacts have been informal with little or no understanding of a district's total program and how it fits together. Nevertheless most teacher preparation programs have emphasized the organizational arrangement

of the total school system at a theoretical level. Inservice for university faculty would close the theory-practice gap. Is it feasible? Or is it more convenient to throw barriers of time, transportation, and money in the way?

6. What kind of reward system will insure the participation of field-based personnel?

School districts receive four forms of remuneration for working with preservice teachers in our area: fee certificates good for course work, different amounts of money depending on the number of hours of student participation, formal or informal communication of gratitude, or none of the above. With the increasing emphasis on field experiences, expertise of school district staff will be recognized. Will it be rewarded? Is it justifiable to expect a university faculty member to work for \$100 for supervising an entire student teaching experience of 300 hours? Due to lack of communication, teachers are not aware of the value of their expertise and tend to be paid at a lower rate when asked to share it in workshops or seminars. The disparity is frequently noted at the bargaining table when teacher organizations are negotiating contracts. Will the concept of remuneration for services in the field be addressed or ignored until circumstances force the issue?

7. How can increased responsibility for field-based experiences of preservice teachers fit into the school district's need to insure pupil and professional accountability?

Legislation in Ohio is pending regarding pupil and professional accountability. Competency-based education for pupils and management by objectives for staff members are two possibilities being considered by our school district in response to such laws. Their passage will mean greater commitment to developing new policies and and guidelines. The time spent on such activities will encroach on classroom preparation, instruction, and evaluation. Where will the time come to spend on field-based experiences of preservice teachers? Are colleges and universities aware of the commitments public schools must make to comply with legislative mandates?

What efforts are being made to help school districts meet new demands?

8. Should the public agree to the school district's participation in teacher preparation?

The public is the final decision maker relative to the funding of public schools. In Ohio, recent court decisions have caused the issue of school finance to be reviewed and revised. Tax levies and bond issues have gone down to defeat continually and rising costs have made the squeeze to make ends meet even more difficult.

Parents view preservice teachers with hesitation. They are told that preservice teachers will provide aid and more time for professional attention to pupil's individual problems. However, parents are aware of the horror stories of classroom teachers who leave preservice teachers in charge and relax in the lounge for an extended period of time.

It is clear that better monitoring of the cooperating classroom teacher needs to be made. Roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined and public relations need to become a priority so pupils understand the roles of the preservice teacher. Selection of qualified cooperating teachers needs to be carefully done.

As all of this is being accomplished, the question must be asked: Who has responsibility for training teachers? Why should a parent's child be subjected to preservice teachers whose expertise is unknown when success and mastery learning are so important? And finally, why should the public school bear the burden of explaining the value of having preservice teachers in the classroom?

University Perspective

For two years a 25 member university-public steering committee has been coordinating the development of teacher preparation programs in one university toward compliance with the new Ohio Standards. As indicated in the introduction,

these Standards represent an attempt in our state to move university faculty and school personnel into collaborative arrangements for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of teacher preparation programs; in other words, the Standards represent an attempt to reduce the theory-practice gap.

Seven issues hold much of the key to any lasting university-school district collaboration and hence to any significant reduction in the theory-practice gap. Each of these is discussed separately.

1. Will increased field experiences improve the quality of teacher preparation programs?

Implied in the introduction is the assumption that if preservice teachers spend more time working with real kids, the quality of teacher preparation will improve. One common way of achieving an increase in "field hours" is to include X amount of school visitation time into all methods courses. Students's experiences may range from general observation to actual participation in classroom activities with specific objectives to be accomplished.

Emphasizing the "amount of time" preservice teachers spend in the field in many cases will fulfill state mandates. But, will increased "amount of time" in the field make a qualitative difference in teacher preparation?

2. If professional schools of education maintain present organizational structures that are compatible with the arts and sciences, can teacher educators establish more than peripheral relationships with the field?

If we examine the history of teacher education in this country, rather distinct periods can be noted. Cremin (1953) describes four: 1600-1789 when there was virtually no interest in teacher education; 1789-1860 when normal schools were established for the training of teachers; 1860-1910 when teachers colleges were established and teacher education was introduced into liberal arts colleges; and finally the establishment of professional schools of education to prepare teachers in multi-purpose universities.

Running throughout these periods seems to be the ever growing struggle of teacher educators to establish their legitimacy in higher education. Perhaps this contributed to the adoption of a liberal arts organizational structure in most professional schools of education. Perhaps this structure was cemented in the 60's with the advent of teacher education as an all-university function.

At this point one might ask, so what? If professional schools of education are part of universities why shouldn't they be organized like other university divisions? The problem is this: How can teacher educators send preservice teachers to the field for earlier and increased field experiences when concurrently these same preservice teachers are to be taking courses in the arts and sciences?

Given the liberal arts tradition in many universities, professional schools of education seem to be expected to "fit" field experiences for their students around the schedules of campus-based courses in the arts and sciences. With this situation, can teacher educators and school district personnel establish more than peripheral relationships?

3. If teacher educators become more field-based, are we committing professional suicide within the university?

Assume that issue #2 above can be resolved, and that on-campus courses can be scheduled to allow preservice teachers to be in the schools throughout their preparation programs. This means that teacher educators from professional schools of education will spend increased time out in the schools to supervise the field experiences of their students.

Such arrangements may be feasible at the operational level. In fact, if faculty are diffused away from campus there may be less time for one department to coalesce against another over internal matters.

Regarding faculty advancement and replacement with the university, dispersement of faculty to the field can create problems. Kazlov (1974) has documented that off-campus work is less valued by the university than campus-based teaching.

During promotion and tenure decisions will field-based teacher educators be overlooked? When universities hire teacher educators to supervise field-based experiences, will less expensive and therefore less credentialed persons be hired? In fact, if we, teacher educators, make a firm commitment to the importance of more and earlier field-based experiences for our students and thus spend more time away from campus supervising those experiences, are we committing professional suicide within the university?

4. If professional schools of education are closely aligned with the field, will subject area methods faculty press to join departments in the arts and sciences?

It would appear that over time somewhat of a collegial relationship would exist between subject area methods faculty and specialists in the respective arts and sciences. In some cases subject area methodologists even may have taught an occasional course in an arts and science department.

If the answer to issue #3 is affirmative, that is, movement of teacher educators to the field is analogous to committing professional suicide in the university, would subject area methods faculty press to become members of departments "across campus"? This certainly would be in keeping with the dominant slogan of teacher-education as an all-university function. Preservice teachers could fulfill their major requirements and their methods courses in the same departments. They could move to the professional school for their field-experiences and foundations.

Since educational foundations seem to be under constant fire within universities and could be taught through protocol materials, foundations faculty could be moved to the field. Supervisors of field experiences already would be field-based. Professional schools of education would be (and are in some places) concerned only with graduate education. Would we be back to the normal school approach in the professional component of teacher education?

5. Should teacher educators turn supervision of field-based experiences over to classroom teachers?

Teacher educators could avoid some of the problems noted above, namely risking a move to the field and a clash with arts and sciences faculty on campus. We could require students to complete their major requirements before coming to the professional school. After students enter the professional school, we could confine our responsibilities to campus-based instruction and turn supervision of field-based experiences over to classroom teachers. Do classroom teachers want this responsibility and will their districts allow them to accept it?

Would such arrangements be acceptable to university administrators? Certainly financial compensation to school districts would be involved. Likewise, the number of necessary faculty in professional schools of education would decrease.

Perhaps "surplus" faculty could work with classroom teachers who are supervising preservice teachers to help them improve their supervisory skills. This would move university faculty into inservice education, which usually has been school district turf. Would school districts accept such arrangements? Assuming acceptability, could teacher educators provide such services without moving to the field?

6. Should teacher educators continue the strife for university credibility or recognize and declare that the liberal arts model is dysfunctional for professional schools of education?

The current state of much of teacher education seems to be "forced collaboration", with teacher educators in the middle of a five-way squeeze. We are expected to: 1) collaborate with arts and science faculty for the campus portion of teacher education programs; 2) collaborate with public school personnel for the field portion of teacher education programs; 3) collaborate with professional organizations in the governance of teacher education programs; 4) maintain control of field-based experiences so as to keep university student credit hours generated constant or increasing; and 5) solely be accountable for the quality of teacher preparation.

I have already alluded to problems that can occur when teacher educators "move to the field" to collaborate. Howsam (1972) paints an equally grim picture in reference to collaboration with arts and sciences:

Some areas of concern within universities require collaborative effort between academic departments and professional schools. Traditionally teacher education is seen in this way. It is popular to speak of teacher education as 'an all-university function'. Both the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education work from this assumption.

The reality is that teacher education is a high priority concern of the professional school of education and a low priority for the disciplines. Under such circumstances, 'marriages' are bound to fail. Such collaborative relationships as can be arranged will tend to be expedient and transient. The professor from the disciplines who chooses to involve himself in teacher education will, in most cases, find himself receiving a slim share of the rewards and recognitions of his department. He simply is not doing what is valued. No amount of effort is likely to change this on an enduring basis.

The consequence is that, parity notwithstanding, the burden of producing and maintaining collaborative relationships falls on teacher education. Much of its energies often are expended in the effort (Howsam, 1972, p.9).

McLure (1948) and Cushman (1977) tell us that professional schools of education should be organizationally and administratively responsible for teacher education. In Cushman's (1977) language, "the major role of the college of education is to serve as a coordinating, reconciling, and arbitrating agency for all other governance agencies having a contribution to make to teacher education".

Is this feasible with our present organizational structures? O'Hanlon (1976) indicates that neither the liberal arts structure nor models of other kinds of professional schools fits the particular needs of a professional school of education. Should we continue to make token adjustments within our present organizational structures, or declare, that as currently organized, we are dysfunctional and create new organizational structures through which to coordinate, reconcile, and arbitrate among all agencies having a contribution to make to teacher education?

7. Do the training and backgrounds of teacher educators allow us to consider other ways of organizing our professional schools?

If the history of teacher education has been one of struggle for credibility within higher education, it is understandable that teacher educators may be

reluctant to risk reorganization that may make our professional schools look different from other university divisions. Further we must remember that most teacher educators are former elementary or secondary classroom teachers. The present structures have allowed us to "teach our courses" and we have seen that as our main function in teacher preparation.

Perhaps we cannot get beyond our training and backgrounds and function as coordinators of teacher education. As Howsam (1972) suggests: faculty in professional schools of education are the most concerned about teacher education--not public school teachers or the organized professional associations and not university faculty in the disciplines. These other agencies do contribute to teacher preparation. Isn't it our function as teacher educators to coordinate, reconcile, and arbitrate those contributions? If we cannot do this, can the theory-practice gap in teacher preparation realistically be reduced?

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Reduction of the theory-practice gap calls for an integration of all the components of teacher preparation: the professional component (which includes field experiences) and the major requirements. The gap can be reduced by recognizing and encouraging collaboration of all those who have a contribution to make: university faculty in professional schools of education and the disciplines, as well as school district administrators and teachers. The degree to which this collaboration is successful will be directly proportional to the effective resolution of the fifteen issues presented in this paper.

The State of Ohio has provided seed money to begin the process of collaboration. It should be assumed at the outset that these questions cannot be resolved overnight. Cooperation and mutual respect assume that no one institution has all the answers. Indeed sharing and cooperative planning, implementation, and evaluation will allow the best of both institutions (school and college or university) to complement each other. Feedback should be a continual requirement allowing a collaborative arrangement to grow and flourish.

At present our respective institutions are beginning to search for answers to the above questions with the creation of advisory committees who bring ideas for discussion and revision. As we sit together new experiences begin to take shape and possibilities become realities. We find sometimes that the turf we guard so jealously can be shared to greater benefit university and school district goals. The hurdles of money and time are common to both school districts and universities. Effective management of field experiences by university and school district faculties can provide greater professional rewards for each individual. It is the challenge of resolving these issues in the theory-practice gap that brings us together.

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